



# THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

1230 YORK AVENUE

NEW YORK, NY 10021

October 19, 1989

JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

↓  
Dr. Christian Anfinsen  
Department of Biology  
The Johns Hopkins University  
Baltimore, Maryland 21218

Dear Chris:

I have your letter of October 10th and its appeal for a pledge against the "military use of biological research".

I wish you had taken more time to inform yourself about the details of biological research in the military, before putting the great weight of your name behind a document that has worthy ideals but has some imprecisions. Have you informed yourself about the actual programs at Ft. Detrick? I am sure that Phil Russell and others would be glad to take the opportunity to do that, so you could understand just what biological research is going on in the military.

The most troublesome point is what you mean by "military" use of biological research. Of course the development of biological weapons is a very grave risk in an unstable world and one which deserves all of the ethical opprobrium that lies behind your solicitations. But there are "military uses" of biological research if for nothing more than the medical care of our troops, and their protection against infectious disease in a wide variety of contexts. I cannot believe you intended to condemn those although they would be covered by that general title. And in fact they constitute the overwhelming part if not the totality of the Army's biological research programs. But why don't you look into these and focus on exactly what it is that you would want to prohibit, before mobilizing this broadside.

We are right in the middle of extensive discussions with Soviet biomedical scientists, trying to get them to understand the need for as much public disclosure of their biological research programs as exists in the U.S. In the wonderful new spirit of glasnost, great progress has been made in this direction. They are just beginning to open up. But I am concerned that the political reactionaries in the Soviet Union will feel that they can make hay out of our domestic attacks against the U.S. Army's program and slow up the process of glasnost with respect to their own activities.

[saw him on 10/29 - Weizmann]

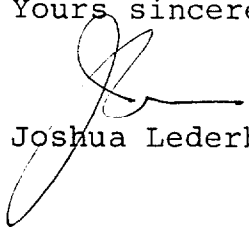
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I have no problem at all with the actual final sentence in the pledge; and perhaps others will understand precisely what is and is not meant by "military use of biological research". But I really would hope that there could have been a more precisely stated context for this campaign so that it would not be subverted for ends and consequences that I believe you would not want either.

You could have an easy opportunity to discuss these matters with your colleague Bob Chanock at the NIH. If I do not see you myself before then I hope you will have done so. He will also be in a very good position to tell you of some of the very undesirable side effects of diminishing the budget for research on exotic diseases, in which historically the Army has played the most constructive role, and which will almost certainly be orphaned as a by-product of this kind of campaign.

Yours sincerely,



Joshua Lederberg

cc: Dr. Robert Chanock

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bcc: Major General Philip K. Russell  
Dr. Thomas Monath

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